

THE RHADÉ TRIBE ONE OF THE LONGER GROUP OF
MONTAGNARD IN THE HIGH PLATEAU
OF SOUTH VIETNAM

Origin. Various authorities seem to indicate that most of the tribal groups migrated from greater China. Some may have come from regions near Tibet and Mongolia. The Indochina area acted as a funnel in the early movement of people from the China area to Malay, Indonesia and the South Seas. There is some evidence that a reversal of this movement occurred meaning that some groups moved through and back into this area from the various geographic areas they had moved to in the Malay & Indonesia. Thus, a relationship is established between tribes in South Vietnam and similar groups in the Malay peninsula, Indonesia, and the Polynesian islanders.

Association with Nature. Tribal life revolves around a natural scheme as provided by nature in the form of land for growing rice, bamboo thatch, and timber for house. The forest is for game; water, for drink, bathing, crops and fish.

Beliefs. Are centered around a God (RHADÉ: AE DIE), a devil (RHADÉ: YANG LIE), and spirits of the soil forest, stream, mountain, ancestors, etc... Sacrifices are made during the year to all Gods and spirits in the form of a buffalo, pig, chicken and jugs of rice wine. The Yang Brua Asei is bracelets around the wrist. Each bracelet represents one buffalo, pig, or chicken promised in sacrifice. The number of cuts on the bracelet shows the number of rice wine jugs promised in sacrifice.

Marriage system. Various family groups are prevented from marriage because of legend about kinship and pseudokinship. If two members of the same clan marry, this angers the spirits, and a wild buffalo must be sacrificed.

Family relationship. The oldest female owns the house and part of the jars, paddy, and animals. When a man marries, he lives with his wife's family and is required by custom to show great respect for his mother in law. Her compartment in the house should be avoided by the sons-in-law, and they should avoid any behavior that might be interpreted as intimate. They treat her with distant respect and this behavior is mutual. At all costs there must be no joking between them. Any breach of this practical requires the po-rice-yang or sorcerer to determine what sacrifice will serve as a remedy. Usually, the son-in-law guilty of a "breach of avoidance" is expected to sacrifice a pig. E'p'ih is the term used, meaning "to wipe away bad blood with a branch".

Village system. The guardian of the village land is the Po Lan who is usually the eldest female of the eldest line in the subclan of each territory. If it should happen that there are no girls in the direct line, a male may become Po Lan. However, his daughter will assume the role after his death.

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Rituals. For planting, harvest, birth, marriage, death, sickness etc... exact routines must be followed if the spirits are to be pleased. The type of ritual and wealth of the family determines the sacrifice in most instances. In the case of sickness the sorcerer determines what is needed for the sacrifice. He usually starts with 1 to 3 jugs of wine with a chicken for each jug. If the victim's condition gets worse, the sorcerer will suggest a pig with 5 jugs of wine. If this fails, a buffalo is then tried with 7 jugs. The family will have to borrow or trade something if they cannot afford all of these sacrifices.

Remedy for sickness. All sores should be cleaned with hot water. Then tree or plant medicines should be prepared to paint the sore. If this does not work, the enchanter is called with his stick. By placing his hand in a certain place he determines the proper sacrifice to cure the sore. Custom for curing a boil is to let it come to a head and then puncture the head and drain the puss. If it does not start to heal, they burn a small hole into the boil with heated metal.

Belief is established that small children have diarrhea because their teeth are growing. If the diarrhea continues, a jar and chicken should be sacrificed. Older adults and children with diarrhea should drink tree medicine. If they pass blood, then a scorpion should be caught by a member of the family in order secretly to give the person affected urine from the scorpion. The reason for secrecy is that the person probably wouldn't drink it otherwise. If this does not work, a sacrifice, chosen by the family, should be made. When the abdomen is severely swollen, the belief is that the spirits are angry or the sorcerer is jealous of that person. The enchanter is called to determine what spirit is angry. An immediate sacrifice must be made, appropriate for the spirit. An effigy sacrifice must also be made to that spirit. A statue of a cow, buffalo or elephant might be made from banana leaves and trunks. Flat gongs are made from gourds and jars, from wood. If an elephant effigy is made, the effigy of a man must be placed on its neck. The effigy sacrifice is then placed near the sick man's field or any place that might be advised by the enchanter. The enchanter proceeds to cut the ropes the spirit has tied around the neck, hands, and feet of the sick man. He also takes away those things placed in or on the man by the spirit, to give him sickness and pain. At this time the sick man is required to drink and eat. Then the enchanter, family, and friends carry on with the gong-playing and sacrifice.

Population of Tribal Groups in South Vietnam.(as printed by USIS and the DGI

Cham	60,000	Bih	20,000
Jarai	150,000	Churu	18,000
Hre	100,000	Jeb	15,000
Rhade	100,000	Chrao	15,000
Koho	100,000	Gar	10,000
Bahnar	75,000	Pakob	10,000
Bru	40,000	Rongao	10,000
Katu	40,000	Lang Ya	9,000
Roglai	40,000	Bu Lach	5,000
Sedang	40,000	Tau Oi	5,000
Stieng	23,000	Ha Lang	4,000
M'Nong	20,000	M'Nom	4,000
Kua	20,000	refugee tribes from NVN	20,000